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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 /018 W
----------105489 242201Z /13
R 242101Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7172
INFO USSOUTHCOM
PANCANAL

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, SWWT, SEDU, PN
SUBJECT: PANAMANIAN ENROLLMENTS AT KINGS POINT MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY

REF: STATE 119190

1. CAPTAIN ANTONIO MOTTA D., DIRECTOR OF PANAMA'S NAUTICAL SCHOOL, ADVISES THAT SCHOOL PRESENTLY OFFERS TWO PROGRAMS. ONE IS FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE ACADEMIC REQUISITES TO START A FOUR YEAR PROGRAM LEADING TO CERTIFICATION AS DECK OR ENGINEERING MERCHANT MARINE OFFICER. SECOND IS A FIVE YEAR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ONE YEAR PREP SCHOOL FOLLOWED BY FOUR YEAR NAUTICAL SCHOOL REGULAR PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS LACKING ACADEMIC REQUISITES TO BEGIN BASIC PROGRAM IMMEDIATELY. CURRICULUM OUTLINE AND OTHER DATA REGARDING NAUTICAL SCHOOL PROVIDED BY CAPTAIN MOTTA POUCHED ARA/PAN.

2. IN EVALUATING DEL PROPOSAL REFTEL, EMBASSY FIRST NOTES IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE THAT GRADUATES FROM KINGS POINT WOULD ULTIMATELY WORK FOR PANAMA CANAL COMMISSION AS PILOTS. OFFICERS NORMALLY ENTER AS CANAL PILOTS-IN-TRAINING ONLY AFTER A NUMBER OF YEARS AT SEA, CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE AND AFTER HAVING SERVED AT LEAST TWO YEARS AS
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SECOND MATE. HOWEVER, BY FACILITATING OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF QUALIFIED PANAMANIAN MANPOWER POOL FOR MERCHANT MARINE SERVICE, DEPT PROPOSAL WOULD INDISPUTABLY ASSIST IN FOSTERING THE OVERALL POOL OF QUALIFIED PANAMANIAN CITIZENS WHICH WULD FORM CANAL COMMISSION'S RECRUITING FIELD. PROPOSAL HAS CONSIDERABLE MERIT TAKEN IN THIS LIGHT.

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3. OUR APPRECIATION IS THAT PANAMANIANS GENERALLY WOULD WELCOME A PROPOSAL ALONG LINES SUGGESTED BY DEPT AND WOULD NOT (UNLESS WE MISHANDLED PRESENTATION) VIEW IT AS AN ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE THEIR NAUTICAL SCHOOL. IN FACT, THE PROPOSAL COULD AND SHOULD BE PRESENTED AS A FURTHER U.S. STEP IN A GOOD-FAITH EFFORT TO PREPARE A PANAMANIAN SUCCESSOR TEAM FOR CANAL MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION.

4. AND, BASED ON DISCUSSIONS OF NAUTICAL SCHOOL PROGRAM AND OBJECTIVES WITH CAPTAIN MOTTA, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE ACTUAL EFFECT OF A PROPERLY-CONCEIVED PROGRAM FOR USE OF KINGS POINT WOULD BE TO DIMINISH THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NAUTICAL SCHOOL; IF DONE CORRECTLY, THE REVERSE COULD BE TRUE.

5. OUR SUGGESTION WOULD BE THAT THE NORMAL TWO PANAMANIAN APPOINTMENTS TO KINGS POINT BE AUGMENTED BY AUTHORIZATION OF ADMISSION OF A TOTAL OF UP TO FIVE (5) ADDITIONAL PANAMANIAN STUDENTS PER ACADEMIC YEAR, PROVIDING THEY MEET REGULAR ADMISSION CRITERIA. THESE ADDITIONAL FIVE STUDENTS SHOULD BE SELECTED, AND SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTED THEM, FROM THE TOP OF THE SECOND YEAR CLASS AT THE PANAMANIAN NAUTICAL SCHOOL. THIS WOULD GIVE SOME ASSURANCE OF OBTAINING STU-
DENTS SERIOUS ABOUT A MERCHANT MARINE CAREER, AND WOLD PRO-
VIDE CONSIDERABLE INCENTIVE TO EXCELL AMONG NAUTICAL SCHOOL UNDERCLASSMEN BY PROVIDING KINGS POINT AS A KIND OF AD-
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VANCED SCHOOL FOR THEM. SUCH EDUCATION WOULD NOT ONLY BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT SELECTED AND TO THE PANAMANIAN MERCHANT MARINE GENERALLY, BUT WOULD, WE BE-
LIEVE, ENHANCE THE STATUS OF THE NAUTICAL SCHOOL AS WELL AND ADD TO INTEREST BY QUALIFIED PANAMANIANS IN ENROLLING THERE FOR A MERCHANT MARINE CAREER. THE LATTER POINT WILL BE STRONGLY IN OUR LONG-TERM INTEREST, SINCE WE MANIFESTLY CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT PLAN ON TRAINING EVERY PANAMANIAN WHO WILL ULTIMATELY WORK AS A PILOT AT KINGS POINT--THE BULK OF THE QUALIFIED MANPOWER POOL MUST BE DEVELOPED BY PANAMA HERSELF THROUGH HER OWN NAUTICAL SCHOOL.

6. WE WOULD RECOMMEND THAT THE NORMAL TWO APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE FOR PANAMAINS IN GENERAL BE RETAINED TO ALLOW FOR APPOINTMENTS FROM SOURCES OTHER THAN THE NAUTICAL SCHOOL. THE FOREGOING SPECIAL PROGRAM SHOULD BE CONSIDERED A LIMITED AND TRANSITIONAL ADDITION PROVIDED IN RECOGNITION OF PANAMA'S STATUS AS PARTNER TO THE U.S. IN THE CANAL OP-
ERATION. WE BELIEVE, THEREFORE, THAT AUTHORIZING LEGISLA-
TION SHOULD SET A TERMINATION YEAR FOR THE ADDITIONAL AP-
POINTMENTS FROM THE NAUTICAL SCHOOL. OUR RECOMMENDED TARGET DATE FOR THIS WOULD BE 1995, RECOGNIZING THAT PANAMA

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MUST DEVELOP HER OWN CAPABILITY TO MANAGE AND OPERATE THE
CANAL BY THE TIME THE CLASS ADMITTED THAT YEAR GRADUATES
AND U.S. RESPONSIBILITY FOR CANAL OPERATION TERMINATES.

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7. OUR PRINCIPAL REASONS FOR SUGGESTING LIMITING THE
NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL APPOINTMENTS TO FIVE ARE:

A. ATTEMPT TO FORCE-FEED A LARGER NUMBER TO KINGS
POINT DOES RUN THE RISK OF UNDERMINING THE PANAMANIAN NAU-
TICAL SCHOOL; ITS PRESENT ENROLLMENT DOES NOT PROVIDE SUF-
FICIENT MANPOWER TO ALLOW APPOINTMENT OF A GREATER NUMBER
FROM THIS SOURCE WITHOUT SETTING UP A 'DISCARDED' FEELING
AMONG THOSE NOT APPOINTED.

B. THIS LEVEL WOULD, ASSUMING INCEPTION IN 1779-80
ACADEMIC YEAR AND LAST INPUT IN 1995, YIELD ABOUT 75 KINGS
POINT GRADUATES TO SERVE AS A HIGHLY-QUALIFIED CORE OF
PANAMANIAN MERCHANT MARINE OFFICERS BUT WITHOUT PRODUCING
SO MANY AS TO APPEAR TO FORECLOSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRAD-
UATES OF PANAMA'S OWN NAUTICAL SCHOOL.

C. THIS LEVEL WOULD IN OUR JUDGEMENT PROVIDE INCENTIVE
FOR THE PANAMANIAN NAUTICAL SCHOOL TO INCREASE ITS STUDENT
BODY TO A POINT WHERE, BY 1995, IT SHOULD BE CAPABLE OF
SUPPORTING PANAMA'S MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS IN THIS FIELD
WITHOUT FURTHER OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE. IN FACT, SOME OF THE
EARLIER KINGS POINT GRADUCATES CAN PROBABLY RETURN TO EX-
PAND INSTRUCTOR CAPABILITY AT THE NAUTICAL SCHOOL AS THIS
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PROGRAM PROGRESSES.

8. FOREGOING ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARE BASED ON EMBASSY CONSULTATION WITH PANAMA CANAL COMPANY/GOVERNMENT, U.S. NAVY IN CANAL ZONE, AND INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH CAPTAIN MOTTA OF PANAMANIAN NAUTICAL SCHOOL. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE BEING PROMPTLY INFORMED OF ANY DECISION TO PROCEED FURTHER IN CONSIDERATION OF THIS PROPOSAL SO THAT WE MAY CONSULT IN MORE DETAIL WITH INTERESTED GOP OFFICIALS PRIOR TO ANY FORMAL SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS. JORDEN

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